



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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**TOWARDS BORDERLESS AFRICA:  
OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY AFCTA**

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE, KAREN**

1. As you graduate from this institution, it is critical for you to consider this milestone in its full perspective against the general trajectory of your career progress and, more importantly, to consider deeply the many ways in which what you have learnt affects your understanding of national security in its theoretical dimensions and practical applications in various contexts.
2. It is with this in mind that I am delighted to have this opportunity of inviting you to reflect briefly on the nature and meaning of security in a highly dynamic global, regional and national context, and how our understanding defines the clarity with which we perceive and engage with potential, shortcomings, opportunities and threats in the relevant operating environment.
3. Because we are at an outstanding institution of excellence, and because this event marks your graduation after a thorough course of rigorous training, this reflection takes it for granted that each one of you is highly equipped intellectually for the tasks you will be called upon to perform, and that you possess the capability to remain fully aligned with military doctrine and effectively responsive to rapidly mutating strategic settings. Congratulations are much in order, therefore, to you for attaining a level of command, proficiency and professional development which enables you to play leading roles in advancing our national defence and security agenda.
4. We have come a long way from the old formulation of security as the protection of persons and property from violent injury or destruction, which defined security principally in terms of the absence of such threats. Appreciating the role of vulnerability in providing conditions for conflict to emerge or escalate has helped to broaden the definition of security and enlarged the responsibility of the security sector beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries.



5. Consequently, we now appreciate the implications of food security, economic security, social security, water security and ecological security as intrinsic components of a proper understanding of security. An interdisciplinary approach to security analysis makes all the difference in enhancing our capacities and efficiencies. Crises in many sectors can breed security threats, while emergencies like flooding, wild fires and major accidents are generally understood to be security issues.
6. Until recently, pragmatic understanding of security threats worked on the primary assumption that hostile armed parties are inevitably involved, and that the challenge was to develop sufficient offensive, defensive and deterrent capabilities, and to deploy them effectively in order to promote clearly defined objectives.
7. Today, we all understand that, in addition to armed groups, hostile parties can organise and deploy at other more insidious levels, both from outside our territory and also from deep inside our communities. Technology has introduced a novel dimension to the complexity of our strategic environment. In particular, digital technology is proving to be radically disruptive on a continuing basis.
8. As the world economy becomes more integrated through globalisation, supply chains are integrating more tightly. Efficiency depends on the unimpeded movement of money, goods and services from any point on earth. Recent events have brought home the catastrophic implications of supply chain disruptions: The lockdowns effected during the Covid-19 pandemic turned the lives of people all over the world upside down. Similarly, the crises in the Middle East and Europe have had similar impacts.



9. Likewise, our understanding of underlying drivers of conflict and insecurity are clearer. In the old times, security sector professionals lived in an insular universe where they never had to concern themselves with developments in the political, economic or ecological sphere. Not so anymore. We know that scarcity of vital resources, especially water and pasture as well as food, create volatility and tension that can lead to conflict and violent disorder. Extreme vulnerability and its underlying dynamics deserve the full attention of military and security sector leaders like you.
10. Since the integrity of supply chains matters, all agencies likely to undermine it are inevitable subjects of your strategic deliberations. Similarly, ecological integrity and the resilience of communities to climate change are also crucial subjects for security analysis. Vulnerability to mischief in the digital sector persists. As we automate and digitise more, the implications of such vulnerability will amplify. We rely on digital technology to support many aspects of our lives, and denial-of-service attacks are risks which intensify our vulnerability in many ways, from our bank accounts to power supply, life support to fake news reports.
11. The rise of Artificial Intelligence has multiplied digital threats beyond our capacity to imagine. For example, it is now possible to generate believable images and fake news using AI just as it is possible to execute sophisticated identity theft and generate a virtual replica to successfully impersonate actual people and, in their name, cause harm and commit crime. Aside from the victims of such harm, the persons whose identity is hijacked in this manner can get into all sorts of complicated problems.
12. It is clear that just as the nature and causes of security threats traverse sectors, security policy and analysis must also be interdisciplinary. In other words, we must see the disciplinary landscape of security strategy as borderless.



13. Speaking of borders, the imperatives of Pan African unity and prosperity throughout the continent has mandated us to undertake a fundamental reset of Africa's development strategy. Our regional integration projects have shed a bright light on the spectrum of opportunities that can be unleashed by taking down historic barriers to trade and collaborations traditionally enforced through territorial borders.
14. Throughout the integration process, each barrier taken down multiplied possibilities for people on each side by an order of magnitude. Regional economic communities have accelerated trade and investment, promoted productivity and deepened the bonds of mutual understanding between the peoples across boundaries.
15. The natural next step in this noble enterprise, therefore, was to actualise the dream of Pan-African integration and open up a vast platform for 1.4 billion Africans to contribute to and benefit from our continent's transformation.
16. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) finally takes down the walls that have long hindered our progress. By streamlining Customs procedures, harmonising trade policies and reducing tariffs, we are creating a frictionless environment that not only facilitates the movement of goods and services, but also crucially the movement of people who are the foremost source of Africa's power. The free flow of skill and talent across our borders will ignite innovation and cross-border collaborations, fuelling our collective entrepreneurial spirit and driving inclusive growth that benefits all.
17. Moreover, the AfCFTA is set to be a catalyst for unprecedented infrastructure development and regional connectivity.



By investing in robust transport networks, reliable energy grids and cutting-edge digital infrastructure, we are bridging logistical gaps and unlocking new trade corridors. This interconnectedness empowers not just businesses but strengthens regional cooperation, paving the way for a more integrated and resilient Africa.

18. In essence, the AfCFTA fosters a fertile ground for innovation and knowledge exchange. By promoting technology transfer, nurturing small and medium-size enterprises, and encouraging vibrant cross-border partnerships, we are poised to unleash the vast potential of our people. This nurturing environment will allow African ingenuity to flourish, leading to the development of new industries, job creation and a diversified and competitive economy.
19. As we develop and analyse both policies and strategies, we all have a duty to envision a united Africa where economic opportunity and prosperity are accessible to all. By dismantling trade barriers and promoting integration, the AfCFTA creates a conducive environment for business to thrive, fostering growth and expansion. It also embodies African unity and integration, enhancing our strength in unity. Through this, we are not just transforming markets; we are building a brighter future for every African.
20. The scope and significance of the AfCFTA are profound. It brings together diverse economies, cultures and resources in one of the world's largest free trade areas. By eliminating trade barriers and fostering a seamless trading environment, we are facilitating the movement of goods, services and people across Africa.



21. Thus, the AfCFTA is more than just a trade agreement; it is the blueprint for a prosperous, interconnected Africa. We are dismantling walls to foster seamless trade and integration across our continent. This is our moment to reshape the future, and to show the world the power of African unity and ingenuity.
22. Let us therefore embrace the AfCFTA as a historic milestone in our people's collective movement towards the Africa we want - a flourishing continent with boundless opportunities, united in prosperity and resilient in its march towards progress by adopting a security philosophy that transcends the limitations of borders, leveraging the power of integration to bring us all into a single territory where there is no conflict between our aspirations for safety and security.
23. Thus liberated from preoccupations with our discrete domestic security agendas, we will not only become more efficient together, but we will also be able to focus on threats farther afield as well as emerging challenges of a fundamentally transnational and global character. With the scale and aggregate capacity arising from our diverse gifts, skills, experiences and insights, our security paradigm will certainly evolve to keep pace with the transformative ambition of an Africa rising to take its place as the global economic hub and the epicentre of a new era in the history of global economic development, powered by AfCFTA. This is the real opportunity before us, and I encourage you to be ready for it.
24. In Kenya, our national security and defence apparatus has embraced a nuanced and multi-disciplinary posture. We are not only acquiring the technological capacity to confront complex present and emerging threats, we have expanded our threat horizon and diversified our surveillance mechanisms in order to be efficient in scanning it. We have not shied away from harnessing the power of community partnerships, digital technology, automation and robotics. Neither have we hesitated



to deploy in response to a broad range of emergencies, including ecological disasters.

25. To further secure the nation against ecological disaster, the Kenya Defence Forces have taken up the leadership of the national afforestation and landscape restoration campaign, which is aimed at mobilising the nation to plant 15 billion trees by 2032.
26. A borderless Africa is an integrated Africa with overwhelming prospects of lifting hundreds of millions of people into prosperity, thus entrenching sustainable economic security and enriching the fundamental complementarity between progress and security. To this extent, AfCFTA is not only of immense interest for those of us concerned with national security, it is the best news of our time.

**I thank you.**

